



LIBRARIES

Library Board of Trustees Meeting Thursday, October 28, 9am ImagineIF Columbia Falls MEETING MINUTES

In attendance: Heidi Roedel, Doug Adams, Connie Leistiko, Marsha Sultz, David Ingram (Board); Martha Furman, Teri Dugan, Starr White, Tony Edmundson (Staff); Charlotte Housel (Library Foundation)

Guests present: Susan Bosurtha, Joan Ehrenberg, Valeri McGarvey, Barbara Boorman, Michael Renaud, Barbara Myers, Jordonna Does, Carmen Cuthbertson, Margaret Davis, Sharon Furlong, Jim Carlberg, Jill Carlberg, Lorraine Measure, Diane Taylor-Mahnke, Stu Wilson, Dorothy Laird, Patti Mason.

- A. Call to Order:** Chair H. Roedel called the meeting to order at 9:04 am.
- B. Open time for persons to address the Board on matters within the Board's jurisdiction.**

Valerie McGarvey- spoke in favor of not removing books from the library collection.

Carmen Cuthbertson- asked about where to find library salaries and if they were public. Cuthbertson said people should read the book in its entirety before forming an opinion.

Jordonna Does- Asked the Library Board to please make a preliminary property transfer agreement of the Bigfork Library a top priority.

Diane Taylor-Mahnke- Expressed the importance of public libraries and asked the Library Board to reflect their love of libraries in the decisions they make.

Joan Vetter Ehrenberg- Expressed the importance of libraries being a safe place to read information about topics society does not understand. Ehrenberg stated that removing a book would be illegal and violate our freedom of speech as well as bring a lawsuit.

Furman introduced Columbia Falls Branch Manager, Tony Edmundson. Edmundson provided an update about the Columbia Falls Library. Edmundson complimented the Columbia Falls staff for working hard to provide safe and successful programming and service during the pandemic and beyond. Edmundson also thanked the Kalispell staff for continued support to the

Columbia Falls branch. Sultz applauded Edmundson for the wonderful job in leading the Columbia Falls team.

- C. Approval of Minutes** Board Meeting, Thursday, September 23, 2021
Moved by C. Leistiko "to approve the September 23, 2021 board minutes as presented."
Seconded by D. Adams
Motion passed unanimously

D. New Business

1. Materials Challenge

Interim Director Furman received a completed Citizen Comment form about a book that the library owns. The Board and staff will be following the Collection Management Policy to handle the challenge.

DISCUSSION:

Furman reviewed the Collection Management policy and explained the next steps in the process in handling a formal challenge. A team will be assembled and professional staff will read the book. A recommendation is then made to the Library Board.

Adams asked about the timeline to complete such a project. Adams said the Board will read the book before any decision was made.

Furman said the comment form is provided to give the public the right to speak about a book and the process must happen in a public forum. It is through these processes that the First Amendment is tested and protected.

Leistiko reminded the Board that the Trustees are government representatives and decisions in this area represent the government deciding what information the people have and do not have access to.

Ingram would like a way to involve the community with the collection, but is not sure how to do that.

Leistiko reminded the board that the community does have input and can make requests to order and purchase books through our current system.

Adams said materials are removed all the time through weeding. It is a matter of prioritizing, not censoring. The discussion to buy and retire items is something that already occurs.

Leistiko said this book challenge is a separate issue from operational collection management which includes weeding and material removal and that is what the board is deciding upon.

Furman said the philosophy of the collection development team is to make additions to the collection and keep adding, not to exclude. The choice to check

out and read materials is the patron's decision. Furman reminded the board that the job of the Library Board is to set policy and guide the process. The professional staff are tasked with managing the collection. The Board's duty is not to remove and weed items.

Ingram said the criteria list for materials in the collections policy needs to be reviewed.

Roedel asked where the location of the challenged book was kept. Furman said the book is located in the library's adult collection.

Furman recommends that the Library Board wait to review the Collection Development Policy until the new Director is hired because the Director is responsible for implementing policy. The policy committee could review the criteria at that time. An agenda would be provided.

2. Staff Morale Conversation. How can the Board help?

DISCUSSION:

Roedel asked how the Board could help staff feel encouraged through these transitions.

Furman suggested a message of gratitude and support from the entire Board would be appreciated.

Furman emphasized that staff are worried about the library in general and are not sure of the Board's thinking. Many of their colleagues have left the library and they feel they are left in a neutral zone, not knowing the future of the library and the funding to support it. There is a fear of defunding library services. It's an anxious time. Staff are not sure why the changes are happening.

Adam said it was unfortunate that staff are exposed to the process. In a private company, it is not out in the open as is not the case with a public entity.

Roedel said recent media articles put out are on the negative side. Roedel would like to look at the positives more.

Ingram said it was unhelpful that the article didn't highlight the increased salaries more.

Leistikio suggested the Board recognize that funding for the library has not increased since 2017 and to let the County Commission know the importance of library services in the community and to ask the Commission to fund the library at that level. Leistikio stated that as a Board they need to let the County Commission know what an important element the public library is. Leistikio said this would boost staff morale.

Adams said change is hard and over time boards and people change. He said some media articles have been sensationalized. Negative comments seem to get more interest. Prospective Director applicants have read things in a negative light and left negative comments. The Foundation has a right to express themselves,

but the message has been negative. Adams said this does not serve the library well.

Housel responded that as the Foundation Director, transparency is important and press releases have only reported accurate and factual information.

Roedel said some facts were left out.

Housel said it was made clear that increases in Materials Handler wages came from not rehiring a Cataloging Librarian, which is accurate.

Adams said transparency is great. What is written is the Foundations' prerogative, but it may not be beneficial to the library. The Board needs to do what they think is right.

Sultz disagreed and said potential donors need to know what is going on at the library. The Library Board should write a memo to staff through Furman and let them know that we are aware of their concerns and we have their best interest in mind and that the board is trying to balance things equitably.

Moved by M. Sultz "to craft a draft letter of support for staff and to distribute it through Furman."

Seconded by C. Leistiko

Motion passed unanimously

3. Hiring of Director- Updates

DISCUSSION:

Roedel spoke with CPS HR recruiting consultant Andrew Nelson on October 14. At this time 2 applications were in the pool. The posting is advertised on American Library Association, Pacific Northwest Library Association, Mountain Plains Library Association and The Association for Rural and Small Libraries as well as CPS HR websites. Andrew said some feedback has been negative. Roedel remains hopeful as the position is open through November 5th. Roedel will keep the hiring committee up to date. Furman suggested listening to the consultant's suggestions and perhaps the salary level might need to be revisited.

4. Library Closure- 6pm Wednesday, November 24th, 2021.

Moved by D. Ingram "to close the Library at 6pm on Wednesday, November 24, 2021 for Thanksgiving Eve.

Seconded by C. Leistiko

Motion passed unanimously

5. Board Involvement of Hiring Library Professional Personnel

DISCUSSION:

Roedel asked if the Board wants to be involved in the process of hiring professional library staff.

Sultz said the Board should not be directly involved and that it was the Library Director's job to hire staff.

Adams reminded the board that when Furman was named Interim Director, the board voted that no hiring be done without the approval of the Board. Adams would like to know the candidate and see their resume and get Board approval on the hiring of the candidate.

Furman said it was her understanding that the filling of existing positions was okay, but no new positions should be hired without the board.

Leisitiko said if the position is approved in the budget, then the position can be filled.

Furman said it was not common for the library Board to enter into handling the operational end of things and expressed some confusion in the Board wanting to do so. Furman reminded the Board that one Board member does not decide for the Board. The library Board acts as a unit when making decisions.

Adams asked if the Personnel committee has participated in hiring of library staff before.

After consulting with the county HR office, Furman shared that Board involvement of hiring staff is exceedingly rare at the county level and has not been done at the library before. It could have a negative impact on the director search. The personnel committee is mainly involved with staff grievances and complaints.

Leistikio said violating HR rules and policies might be at risk if the Board is involved in library hiring beyond that of the library director.

Furman said she would like to hire the Children's Librarian as soon as possible and would like permission to move ahead so we can fulfill our mission of providing library services to the county.

Adams said the concern stems from a particular incident from a Children's Librarian in the past and does not want that to happen again. It is important to get the right person for the job.

Furman said the incident was handled internally and agreed that she would not want a similar situation to happen again and also wants to prevent that error of audience judgment happening again.

Roedel asked what the hiring team would look for in a Children's Librarian candidate.

Furman explained it would be a combination of experience, emotional intelligence, neutrality, a person who understands library principles. A customer service oriented person with project management skills and program development skills.

Adams said neutrality was the key word he wanted to hear.

Furman assured the board that neutrality and the skills discussed would be key in hiring a Children's Librarian.

Moved by C. Leistiko "to authorize Furman to proceed with hiring a Children's Librarian."

Seconded by M. Sultz
Motion passes unanimously

Break: 10:50 AM
Resume: 11:02 AM

E. Old Business

1. September Staff Reports

Review spreadsheets prepared by staff (Subscriptions, Digital Materials, and Staff restructuring with Lead Worker) in minutes to determine whether there are additional questions.

Adams thanked Anderson for the detailed spending reports.

Sultz thanked Anderson for the work and flexibility during the staff shortages.

Leistiko hopes Anderson can resume the position on the on Shared Catalog Committee at the State Library in the future. Leistiko finds it unfortunate for Anderson to have to resign that position due to staff restructuring.

F. Reports

1. Financial Report

Moved by M. Sultz "to accept the September 2021 Financial Report as presented."

Seconded by C. Leistiko
Motion passes unanimously

2. Interim Director and Staff Reports

Furman said staff are busy. Questions about the written report were answered.

Adams asked about library staff working on Library Foundation tasks. Furman said this is kept to a minimum. As the branding specialist, our marketing coordinator does work on a few projects for the Foundation.

Roedel asked when the website will launch. Furman said November 1st.

- a. Welcome to ImagineIF Columbia Falls- Tony Edmundson
This agenda item occurred at the beginning of the meeting during open comments.

- b. Introduce Starr White
Furman introduced new Adult and Teen Services Librarian, Starr White.

- c. Foundation Report

Housel said the Great Fish fundraiser finished strong with \$41K raised when including the matching grant.

The Foundation Annual Retreat is November 5th and will focus on library advocacy and adequate funding for libraries. Due to programs being reduced, focus will be on making sure the budget for the library, which has been stagnant since 2017, is adequate to provide the services needed by the community. Advocacy planning will take place at the retreat. The entire board is invited. Leistiko and Ingram plan to attend.

Housel is working on mobilizing people to talk with the library Board and County Commission to help build support for the public library. Housel said the ballot box is a way people can express their voice by electing library supporting officials.

As a support agency for the library, it is the job of the Foundation to go to bat for the library and the needs of the library. Fundraising in healthy and good, but adequate funding is the job of the County.

Three new board members have joined the Library Foundation.

Housel stressed the need for a Bigfork property transfer agreement from the Library Board. The MOU was entered into between the library board and the Foundation in 2016.

Housel asked for ways the library Board can help reopen the case for Bigfork with the County Commission and asked for definitive action from the library Board. Housel asked for a discussion, agenda item or workshop with the County Commission so progress can be made toward gifting the county with a new Bigfork Library. A similar gift was accepted by the County for the County animal shelter.

Adams asked what the Bigfork Capital Gift would include. Housel said a new Bigfork Library would include a new library building, property, furniture and an opening day collection of library materials. Housel stressed that the offer is generous and the county would own the building debt-free. Housel said it could be open by the end of 2022 if the ownership issue was resolved.

Furman said a new building would be very attractive to a prospective Director as well.

Adams said he would be willing to meet and discuss the ownership idea with each of the Commissioners. Roedel agreed to participate in the discussion.

Moved by M. Sultz "to authorize Adams and Roedel to approach the County Commission to discuss the possibility of entering into a preliminary property transfer agreement for the future Bigfork Library."

Seconded by C. Leistiko

Motion passed unanimously

G. Housekeeping

Cabin Fever Fundraiser, Friends of the Library, December 2, 2021.

Library Foundation Retreat, Flathead Highschool, November 5th, 2021.

H. Adjourn: 11:52a

I. Roedel thanked everyone for their participation and the good work they are doing for the community. Roedel said she appreciated the difficult work and the ability for everyone to stay positive.